

Moving Beyond Words: Embodied Sex Ed Games

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Exercise Manual

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Game	RHYTHM CIRCLE
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. State the purpose of the game: To laugh, to make music together, to use your body, to challenge, to be imperfect or fail together, to trick our brains, to be goofy/silly together... as appropriate. 2. Start by marching or tapping out a slow steady rhythm, participants follow 3. Count out the rhythm in units of 4: "1, 2, 3, 4" 4. Clap or accentuate on the 1 to establish the count of 4 more clearly 5. Add more claps or snaps, one at a time (can be on shoulder, thigh, knees), make sure participants are following. 6. You can do any pattern. A sample pattern goes like this, with Claps (C) and Snaps (S) added one at a time: 1-----&-----2-----&-----3-----&-----4-----&----- C C C C S
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Get participants to speak on top of the rhythm, as a go around
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is like to think and make the rhythm at the same time? • How did you feel? Especially when you got it "wrong"? Even though the point is to be imperfect?
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PYE – Partnerships for Youth Empowerment

Game	COMMON GROUND
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arrange participants in a circle. Explain the exercise. Read each statement and ask participants to indicate if the statement applies to them (this can be by raising hands, stepping into the circle, etc.). Choose an indicator of agreement that everyone can do. 2. Run the exercise in silence. Encourage participants to be mindful of disclosure and safety. Make clear they can abstain any time. 3. Ask participants to return to the starting point (e.g., stepping back, lowering their hands) before reading the next statement. Start with statements that are less intimate, then move towards disclosure and intimacy. Be mindful of participants' safety and privacy at all times.
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer participants chance to put statements forward. If you do it this way, what each participant says has to be also true for themselves (and thus they move into the circle after offering the statement). b. You can use this exercise for anything – as a survey tool, as a way of getting opinions heard, of sharing deeper. Here are some prompts for different uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a warm-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are a morning person • was born in Canada • is left-handed • can think of a place other than here they'd rather be • likes sex ed class Bullying / harassment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has seen favoritism at work/school • has seen harassment at work/school • feels unsure how to stand up against bullying • (more risky) bullied someone else as a child • (more risky) bullied as a child Communication / relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can speak off the cuff • needs time to think before speaking • has ever point-blank asked someone out • fears rejection • fears having to reject someone • (more risky) has, within the last month, said yes when you wanted to say no Gender Dynamics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has ever been called handsome • has ever been called beautiful • acted less intelligent to protect someone else's ego • acted tough even when you don't feel so tough

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feels okay to cry in front of my friends • feels okay if a friend cries • feels like you are in some ways an exception to gender expectations
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge what you discovered through the exercise (e.g., most people don't like sex ed, or most people find it hard to address bullying) • What did that feel like? What was challenging? What was easy? • What is it like to be the only one on the inside? On the outside? What is it like to be part of a large group? • What do you notice about the group? (e.g., diversity, you cannot know someone's experience)
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many people and organizations do this exercise... I don't know how to credit it!

Game	MILLING
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get participants to move around the room, explore the entirety. Focus is inward, no eye contact with others 2. Prompt them to increase and decrease speed, change directions. Slowly add difficulty and interaction with others: Change the way your moving. Experiment with movement. Make some eye contact. Nod or smile. Touch elbows. 3. Instruct participants to stop and pair up back to back with the nearest person when you clap or give a signal. 4. Clap or give a signal, then prompt them turn around, face their partners, and answer a question. You can give a sentence starter. 5. Instruct participants to turn back around when finished. 6. Continue to “mill” them and pair them a few times, as appropriate
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. You can use the same question/prompt repeatedly (and ask for different answers each time), or you can use a new question/prompt each pairing
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes – none necessary • (if appropriate) How was it to answer the same question over and over and differently? What did you learn about yourself? Was anything compelling? Surprising? Challenging? • What did you learn about the people in the room?
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PYE – Partnerships for Youth Empowerment

Game	COLUMBIA HYPNOSIS
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide into pairs and decide who is "A" and "1" (or some other non-hierarchical designation) 2. Ask "A"s to hold the palm of his or her hand about six inches from "1"s" face 3. Ask "1"s to imagine that their partner's hand is a mirror and they want to see their face in it at all times 4. After you've explained the game and before you begin, ask, "How are you going to keep your partners safe as you move through the space?" 5. As "A" moves around the room "1" follows. After a set time, switch and let "1"s lead. 6. Ensure participants have space and take care to move each other thoughtfully
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Imagine the contact not to be a mirror but a hypnosis: that their partner has hypnotized them and that they have to follow the hand anywhere it goes keeping the same distance between their face and the palm at all times. b. With a mature and thoughtful group: Add another partner so that the person holding the hand up has two faces to maneuver c. With a mature and thoughtful group: Add multiple layers of partners so that a person looking in the mirror is also a mirror for someone else
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it like to be the hand/mirror/hypnotist? What was fun about it, what was challenging? • What was it like to be the face/hypnotised? What was fun about it, what was challenging? • What does this dynamic make you think of? (Care, power, control, leadership, following, consent)
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal

Game	SHAPES
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide into pairs and decide who is “A” and “1” (or some other non-hierarchical designation) 2. Ask partners face each other like they are in front of a mirror. Ask “A”s to move slowly and “1”s to follow like a mirror image. 3. After you’ve explained the game and before you begin, ask, "How are you going to keep your partners safe as you move through the space?" 4. Ensure participants have space and take care to move each other thoughtfully 5. After a set time, switch and let “1”s lead 6. After a set time, ask the partners to try to mutually lead. Both people imitate the other; lead and follow at the same time.
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it like to be the leader? What was fun about it, what was challenging? • What was it like to be the follower? What was fun about it, what was challenging? • What was it like to co-lead? How did you know how to move? Did you know what was going to happen along the way? • What do you think makes for a good co-operative team? (Communication, sensitivity, giving and receiving, taking risks, keeping each other safe, smiling/trust/rapport, willingness to learn) • What does this dynamic make you think of? (Care, power, control, leadership, following, consent, reading signals, friendship)
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal

Game	Fear/Protector
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make clear that this is a game of pretend. It's not real, and it's a game. 2. Get participant to pick 2 other participants secretly, designating one as "F" and one as "P" (or any other non-identifying designation) 3. Once selected, designate one as Fear and the other Protector. Ask participants to move around the room to avoid their Fear, and put Protector between themselves and their Fear 4. Watch for pooling and patterns of movement. End game after some time or ask some of the participants (e.g., everyone with birthdays in X month and Y month) to switch their Fear and Protector. This will reorganize the patterns.
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it like? What did it feel like to have a Fear? A protector? • What dynamics did you notice? • Did your Fear know you feared them? Do you know whose Fear you were? • What are your relationships to Fear and Protection? How does this relate to the real world?
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigid Tierney

Game	PHOTOGRAPHER
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make a list for whatever topic (e.g., STI symptoms, types of birth control, ways of having non-penetrative sex, places to get tested, where to get sexual health info), put each item on a card or piece of paper 2. Get the same number of people to each hold a card and pose for a photo. Make it fun and funny as appropriate. 3. Get one person, multiple people, or the rest of the group to take a mental (or real) photo 4. Have the photographer(s) turn around or look away 5. Ask the people posing to move to a new pose, also fun/funny, but hide one person along with their card behind the group 6. Ask the photographer(s) to identify who's missing and what their card said
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on the chosen topic more, talk about each card or highlight the importance of certain cards • You can also ask participants holding cards to say something about the card they're holding, and add to it with more information after
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. W. Newstrom, and E. E. Scanell. 1980. <i>Games trainers play: experiential learning exercises</i> New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Game	ISLANDS
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This game involves closing eyes, respecting other peoples' personal space, and feeling vulnerable. Assess if it's appropriate for your group 2. Ask participants to "mill" around the room as per "MILLING" exercise 3. Ask them to stop in place upon a signal (e.g., a clap, a whistle) 4. Ask participants to close their eyes. 5. Instruct the group that if they are tapped on the shoulder by you, they should open their eyes and move around. Tap a few of the participants' shoulders. Let them look and move around. Instruct them not to touch anyone. 6. Instruct the group that if they are tapped on the shoulder by you, they should open their eyes. Tap a few of the participants' shoulders. Let them look around while frozen in place. 7. After a set time, stop the game and debrief.
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it like for you? For each role, what was challenging? • What does this dynamic remind you of, in real life? (e.g., bullying, consent, keeping secrets, feeling lonely or alone, envy of others, feeling out of the loop / left out, guilt, care for others)
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hawa Y. Mire

Game	BODY SCULPTURES
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This exercise requires some amount of touching and asking for consent to touch. Assess whether it is appropriate for your group. 2. Divide into pairs and decide who is "A" and "1" (or some other non-hierarchical designation) 3. Give a word or phrase prompt and have "A" sculpt "1" into some expression of that prompt. Remind participants it doesn't have to be literal. 4. Give 20-60 seconds for sculpting. Ask sculptors to then show the group and talk about their sculpture (e.g., what they were expressing, how they made their choices) 5. Switch roles and give new prompts
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Prompts can come from you or work that you previously to do with the group (e.g., pull themes and words from brainstorm, discussions, or questions). b. Have groups of 3, so that one person sculpts the other two. This option is great for talking about relationships (e.g., describing, through embodiment, an enmeshed relationship)
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did it feel like to be sculpted into X? Did your feelings change when you embodied an idea or word? • Debrief by asking questions about the themes and not the exercise itself
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brigid Tierney

Game	SENSITIVITY LINE
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. STAGE 1: Invite 4 or 5 volunteers to stand in a line with their backs to the audience. They should be standing close to each other but not touching. 2. When the facilitator says “Go,” one person in the line (A), in silence, turns to face the audience. 3. “A” must remain facing the audience until another person (B) randomly turns to face the audience. “A” then must turn back so that there is only one person facing the audience at a time. 4. The players in the line one at a time continue to randomly turn to face the audience. 5. When the group gets into a flow, it looks like doors revolving seamlessly toward and away from the audience. 6. STAGE 2: Prompt the players to each speak on a certain topic or tell a story. Each time they turn to face the audience, the continue where they left off. Start with topics or stories that are easiest for the players (e.g., Best movie of the year, pizza, summer holidays, sports, etc.). Move to more challenging topics (great sex education prompts include: Tips on social media use, indicators of a healthy friendship, ways to tell if someone has a crush on you, how to ask someone out, where to get free condoms, and so on).
Some Debrief Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand on the topic as appropriate and adjust any misinformation spoken by the players
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PYE – Partnership for Youth Empowerment

Game	IMAGES (aka IMAGE THEATRE)
Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This exercise requires a high level of sensitivity from the facilitator. Consider participating in it a few times before facilitating it. This exercise also involves touching. Establish how to ask for consent before beginning the exercise (e.g., “may I?” then gesture, or “may I put my hand on your knee?”) 2. Explain this exercise as you go. Form a circle – this is the “theatre”. Strike a simple pose in the theatre. Explain that still images with bodies are powerful and full of story. Explain also that different stories can be read into any image, that there are no right answers. 3. Join the circle. Ask a volunteer (“A”) to strike a pose in the theatre. Ask other participants to read and reflect on the image. Invite one person (“B”) to join the image – whoever feels like they can add to the image, to express a feeling or story. Now there are two bodies in the image (A and B). 4. The actors to freeze their pose until another actor (“C”) “tags out” the first actor by touching them on the shoulder. The new actor freezes in a new pose, in a relationship to “B”, the actor remaining and frozen. Now it is “B” and “C” forming the image together. 5. Repeat the cycle so that “D” tags out “B”, “E” tags out “C”, and so on. 6. Encourage the group to reflect on what they see, feel, and think. Prompt them with questions about power — Who has it? Who doesn’t? How do we know? 7. When you arrive at a particularly powerful image that is unresolved and holds potential for change, pause the game. Ask participants to read the image more closely and begin adding actors to the image without removing anyone. Build the image up to as many as 6 or 7 actors. Look for possibility in complicating the image. Pause when complete. 8. Ask each actors frozen in the image to think about their role, and in their mind to complete the sentence “I want...”. Ask them to speak their sentence aloud when you tap them on the shoulder (and ask them not to change their answer based on other people’s answers). Once everyone has an answer in mind, tap each actor on the shoulder until everyone has spoken. 9. Ask each actor to imagine, based on what they want, an ending pose that would express the achievement of what they want. Ask them to think of getting to that pose in 3, 4, or 5 steps (you choose a number). Once everyone has decided how they want to move, clap or give a signal for them to take step 1. Pause a few seconds and give the clap/signal for step 2. Move through all steps and consider the final image before ending the scene.
Variations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. In addition to “I want”, “I need” is a good prompt too. You can use both, and compare the two answers from each actor. They can move, in the final scene, towards what they want or what they need. You’ll have to determine that based on the potential you see for resolution.
Some	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflect on what just happened. What stories did you see? What was unresolved and what were some of the proposed resolutions?

Debrief Questions	2. What did they notice about this exercise? What was it like to participate, to observe? 3. In what ways did the tensions or resolutions presented reflect real life?
Adapted from	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal• Brigid Tierney